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ABSTRACT

Changes in confidence to perform selected evaluation activities that occurred for 45 preservice teachers majoring in elementary school education during their student teaching experience were studied. Self-confidence was measured before and after the student teaching semester using the Mississippi State University Survey of Confidence in Teaching Reading (SCTR). An evaluation skills cluster of 13 items was 1 of 5 clusters of skills on the SCTR. Prestudent and poststudent teachers rated interpreting standardized test scores to parents as their least confident task to perform in school. Before student teaching, students were most confident about their ability to explain the grading system. After student teaching, students' confidence in their ability to explain how well the child was doing regardless of grading was highest. The evaluation cluster was the lowest rated of all five reading instruction areas, but it was the cluster in which the greatest increases in confidence occurred. Increased confidence in assessment activities appears to have a significant impact on student teaching. A table summarizes t-test comparisons between prestudent and poststudent scores on evaluation skills. (SLD)

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SELF-CONFIDENCE AND EVALUATION SKILLS: CHANGES DURING THE STUDENT TEACHING EXPERIENCE

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The purpose of this study was to determine the changes which occurred during the student teaching experience of elementary education majors regarding their confidence to perform selected evaluation activities. Measures were obtained from 45 preservice teachers immediately before and after their student teaching during the fall semester of 1991 at Mississippi State University.

Self-confidence was measured by scores from the Mississippi State University Survey of Confidence in Teaching Reading (SCTR) which was piloted exclusively for this investigation. The SCTR contained five clusters of reading skills typically taught by classroom teachers in elementary schools. Those clusters included: specific approaches to teaching reading, organizational skills, general reading skills, critical thinking skills, and evaluation skills. The evaluation skills cluster contained 13 items on which students were asked to rate their perceived confidence or ability to actually conduct selected assessment activities with children in classrooms. The specific focus of the

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study was the degree of change which might or might not take place during student teaching with respect to these evaluation skills. Comparisons were made using both analysis of variance and t-tests for dependent groups.

The following results were obtained in the study:

1. Of the 13 items in the evaluation cluster, both groups of student teachers rated interpreting standardized test results of students to parents as their least confident task to perform in the schools. Using a Likert type five-point rating scale, prestudent teachers had an overall mean of 3.04 while poststudent teachers had an overall mean of 3.53 (see Table 1).
2. Prestudent teachers expressed the most confidence in their ability to explain either the local school or their own individual classroom grading system to parents. Poststudent teachers expressed the highest level of confidence in their ability to explain to a parent how well their child was doing in their classroom irrespective of a grade.
3. Analysis of the scores in all five cluster skills revealed the evaluation cluster to be the lowest rated by both groups of student teachers. That is, subjects in the study exhibited less confidence in their ability to conduct reading activities involving eval-

Table 1

Summary of T-Test Comparisons Between Pre- and Poststudent Teachers on Evaluation Skills

Cluster	$\bar{X}$	SD	t-value	df	p
Parent Conferences					
Prestudent	3.45	.84			
Poststudent	4.02	.84	3.78	43	.001*
Communicating/teachers					
Prestudent	3.81	.85			
Poststudent	4.48	.70	4.81	42	.001*
Monitor Progress					
Prestudent	3.70	.66			
Poststudent	4.40	.65	5.49	43	.001*
Tests/Corrective Feedback					
Prestudent	3.43	.75			
Poststudent	4.36	.78	6.87	43	.001*
Tests/Grades					
Prestudent	3.84	.74			
Poststudent	4.54	.62	5.49	43	.001*
Tests/Reliable or Valid					
Prestudent	3.32	.94			
Poststudent	3.95	.89	3.77	42	.001*
Student Weaknesses					
Prestudent	3.76	.79			
Poststudent	4.23	.72	3.58	41	.001*
Explain Grading System					
Prestudent	4.16	.78			
Poststudent	4.53	.79	2.44	42	.05*
Explain Progress/Parents					
Prestudent	4.11	.76			
Poststudent	4.48	.63	2.71	42	.05*
Standardized Test/Parents					
Prestudent	3.04	.81			
Poststudent	3.53	1.18	3.17	42	.01*
Written Records					
Prestudent	4.02	.73			
Poststudent	4.40	.65	2.71	43	.05*

uation than other kinds of activities. For example, the students felt significantly more confident in their abilities to execute a wide variety of organizational skills or to plan lessons involving critical thinking skills with children than to execute assessment activities.

4. A dramatic finding in the study was the change which occurred during the student teaching period with respect to the evaluation cluster items. Using t-tests for dependent groups to compare the same student teachers both before and after student teaching, 12 of the 13 items were found to be statistically significant. No other cluster contained as many significant changes during student teaching. The only item on which student teachers did not significantly shift their confidence levels was in their ability to use various reading inventories to assess student progress There can be little doubt that student teaching has a powerful impact on students in a variety of ways; the results of this study suggest that confidence to carry out evaluation and measurement activities is one of those ways.

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In recent years, teacher self-confidence has received increased emphasis in the research literature (Ashton & Webb, 1986). Several studies have confirmed that strong positive correlations exist between teacher self-confidence and subsequent student achievement. Bandura (1982) has postulated that a teacher's perception of their ability to perform selected classroom activities can actually modify subsequent classroom behaviors. Since Goodlad (1983) has urged teacher education institutions to evaluate themselves on a variety of indicators, it seems plausible that one of those indicators would be the extent to which programs allow students to gain a sense of self-confidence in their abilities to handle classroom realities such as evaluation.

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